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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUBLIN 001494

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/05/2014

TAGS: [KNNP](#) [ENRG](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: CONTINUED IRISH ATTENTION TO THE EUROFAB SHIPMENT

REF: A. DUBLIN 1385

[1](#)B. STATE 198909

[1](#)C. YOUNG-DOOLEY E-MAILS OF 9/23 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)D. IIRG 6 848 010304 R3015552 SEP 04

Classified By: DCM Jonathan Benton, Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: In recent days, the Irish media have continued to focus on the U.S.-France Eurofab plutonium shipment, highlighting opposition by Greenpeace and Irish activists. In reply, the Irish Government has claimed to have received assurances that the shipment will not harm Irish interests. An op-ed in the October 5 Irish Times, the paper of record, echoes the Government's line that steps have been taken to protect Ireland's safety. Irish naval assets, meanwhile, have monitored the progress of the vessels carrying the plutonium. The media coverage reflects continued Irish sensitivities about nuclear power and nuclear weapons, which is aggravated by perceptions of UK apathy regarding possible pollution of the Irish Sea by the UK's Sellafield nuclear plant. End summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Over the past week, the Irish media have continued to focus on the maritime Eurofab plutonium shipment from the United States to the French port of Cherbourg (reftels). On September 29, the Irish Times reported a Paris press conference by Greenpeace, which claimed that the vessels carrying the plutonium would breach Ireland's 200-mile economic exclusion zone. The report noted Greenpeace's concerns about the possibility of radiation release in a maritime accident and also about safety standards used by the French plant that would treat the plutonium. The October 4 Irish Independent reported that an Irish yacht had joined an "international flotilla" in Cherbourg harbor protesting the shipment's arrival. On October 5, the Irish Times carried an op-ed that defended the shipment, saying that the vessels had exercised their right of innocent passage. The op-ed added that the Irish Government had taken all reasonable steps to protect the safety of Irish citizens and to uphold the country's nuclear-free policy.

[1](#)3. (U) On October 4, the RTE 1 and RTE 2 television networks aired separate short interviews about the shipment with Dick Roche, appointed Minister of the Environment and Local Government on September 29. Roche told RTE 1 that "we've been given assurances that this is not going to be a continuous trade, and short of asking the vessels to come into Irish ports and perhaps check them over, I don't see what else we can do." Roche said to RTE 2 that the GOI had been given assurances "that this shipment would not enter Irish coastal waters and it certainly seems that that has been honored." (Per refs B and C, Embassy did not give the GOI assurances as to the routing of the vessels.) Roche explained that "this is a piece of good news for the whole world because this is part of the decommissioning of nuclear vessels." He added that "we would be happier if we didn't have any truck with any form of nuclear material, ... but we live in a world where that happens to be a reality."

[1](#)4. (C) Besides Roche's comments, the only other Irish Government comment on the shipment was a September 20 press release by former Environment Minister Cullen, in which Cullen said he would pursue assurances that the shipment would not enter Irish territorial waters. On October 5, the Department of the Environment's Assistant Principal Officer for Nuclear Safety, Joe Mooney (who received Embassy's ref B demarche) told emboff that there were no plans for additional GOI statements about the shipment. He noted that his office had drawn on talking points provided by the Embassy (ref C) in drafting Minister Roche's talking points for the RTE 1 and 2 interviews. Mooney added that his office would continue to draw on those points if the nuclear issue were raised at formal question-and-answer sessions in the Dail (Irish Parliament) this month.

[1](#)5. (C) The Irish Naval Service, Air Corps, and Coastguard have dispatched assets beyond Ireland's territorial waters, but inside the exclusive fishery zone, to monitor the movements of the vessels handling the plutonium shipment. A contact of Embassy DAO reports that these naval services were under political pressure to monitor the vessels in response to media attention.

[1](#)6. (C) Comment: Nuclear power continues to be an emotional

subject for Ireland, as borne out by continuing media coverage of the Eurofab shipment. This sensitivity derives mainly from the perception that materials from the nuclear reprocessing complex at Sellafield on the UK's Cumbrian coast have polluted the Irish Sea -- a concern that Ireland feels the UK has ignored. The UK Ambassador to Ireland, Stewart Eldon, told emboffs during a recent lunch that Sellafield had become the single most serious irritant in UK-Irish relations.

KENNY